

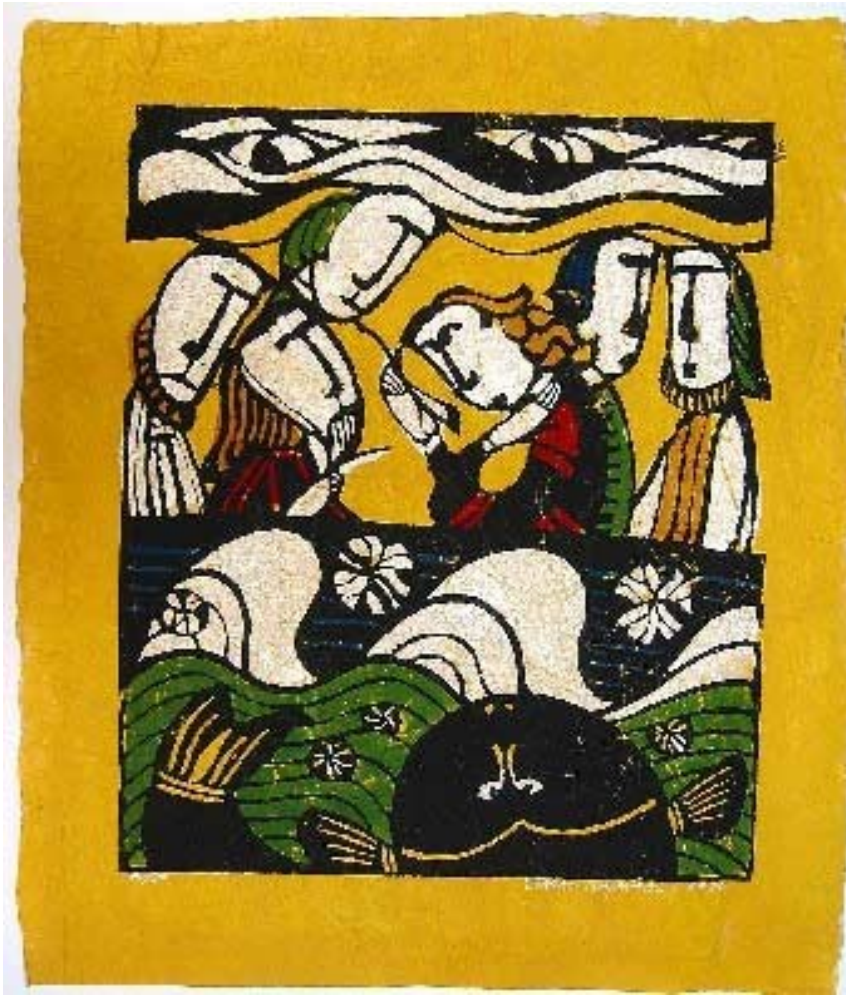
# Reflection

Sadao Watanabe (1913–1996) was a printmaker celebrated internationally for his depictions of biblical subjects using traditional Japanese folk art techniques. Assisted by his wife Harue, Watanabe created his prints in a small studio in his home in Tokyo. His practice was to study and meditate upon a particular passage of Scripture for a period of time. He would then sketch a design, cut stencils, and dye mulberry paper using handmade inks.

This scene is from chapter one of the Book of Jonah. The captain of the boat and four sailors are gathered around Jonah with the blond hair in the center of the boat. Jonah holds in his hand the lot cast by the crew members to discern who was responsible for the storm. The captain asked, “Who are you, where are you from, and who is your God?” Jonah said, “I am a Hebrew and I worship the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.” The sailors then asked, “What have you done?” Jonah then sheepishly explained that he was running away from the Lord.

Meanwhile, in the clouds above the sailors are two Asian eyes looking down upon the scene. They beg the question, “Where can you hide from the all-seeing eyes of the God of heaven?” In the choppy sea below the boat waits the God-appointed happy-looking whale.

Watanabe included one other intriguing Japanese symbol—the lotus flower—printed on the side of the boat and floating in the water. The lotus flower is revered in Japan for its ability to rise from the dirty, murky waters to bloom into a beautiful pure flower. It is a symbol of hope in the midst of suffering. Watanabe suggested with the symbol that Jonah’s shortsighted disobedience that put the lives of an international crew of sailors in jeopardy was not the last word in the story. In fact, Jonah’s disobedience eventually led to the repentance and conversion of all the crew members. God’s grace is greater than our sin.



Jonah  
By  
Sadao Watanabe